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Wisconsin PK-16 Council recognizes four programs for excellence

MADISON—The Wisconsin PK-16 Leadership Council presented four awards during its meeting Wednesday in Madison to recognize collaborative efforts that improve student transition in the PK-16 educational system.

The two Programs of Distinction awards recognize effective practices in education in which collaborative efforts produce documented results in student learning or teaching practice. Recipients of the award receive \$1,000 from the council. Promising Practices awards recognize quality programming that is grounded in research, supports existing partnerships, and encourages collaborative efforts.

“These awards recognize improved student achievement as the bottom line for any program involving PK-12 and postsecondary institutions,” said State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster. “Our efforts must prepare students for college studies and the 21st century workforce.”

The two Programs of Distinction awards for 2008 went to:

The **“Phuture Phoenix Program,”** a collaborative effort between the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay and the Bonduel, Bowler, Green Bay Area, Oconto, Shawano, Sturgeon Bay, Suring, and West De Pere school districts and the Oneida Tribal Schools. Mentoring activities between UW-Green Bay students and fifth- through 12th-grade students inspire at-risk, low-income, first-generation youth to focus on academic achievement, finish high school, and consider postsecondary education. Results after five years show improved achievement, reduced truancy, and increased UW-Green Bay admissions. Equally impressive is the impact on university students, many of whom enter teacher education as a result of their participation.

Moraine Park Technical College’s **“Tech Prep Program”** allows motivated students in 22 area high schools to begin their college career while still in high school. Students may earn both high school and college credit, providing a seamless transition from secondary to postsecondary education. Over five years, enrollment in the Tech Prep Program has almost doubled to nearly 2,500 students and is anticipated at more than 4,000 students in 2008-09. An additional strength of the program is the intensive professional development for high school instructors. Moraine Park Technical College is headquartered in Fond du Lac.

“The PK-16 Leadership Council was founded on the principle that no one sector or level of education has all of the answers, and the whole is greater than the sum of its parts,” said President Rolf Wegenke of the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. “These Programs of Distinction demonstrate that excellence is best achieved when we all work together.”

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“Earning a postsecondary certificate, diploma, or degree is absolutely key to success in today’s labor market,” said President Dan Clancy of the Wisconsin Technical College System. “Increasing the number of students who go on to postsecondary education will benefit not only those students, but also the entire state and our economy. The programs we are honoring point to our ongoing success in developing best practices designed to accomplish this.”

Two programs received 2008 Promising Practice awards.

Western Technical College in La Crosse is the lead partner for the **“Partnering for Success”** program. Designed to increase understanding of technical college expectations, Partnering for Success provides area high school faculty, counselors, and students with opportunities to learn about admission requirements, placement, and course requirements to encourage more rigorous high school preparation and more seamless transition from high school to postsecondary options. Additional partners include Holmen, Logan in La Crosse, Onalaska, and Sparta high schools.

Wautoma Welding Center, with the Fox Valley Technical College as lead partner, helps meet the high demand for entry-level welders in Waushara County and the state of Wisconsin. The center allows high school students to improve their occupational and earning potential and gives them the first step in an educational pathway to a career in welding. Additional partners include Wautoma High School, city of Wautoma, Full Spectrum Welding, CAP Services, Cummins Filtration, United Migrant Opportunity Services, Fox Valley Workforce Development Board, Waushara County Sheriff’s Department, Waushara County Human Services Department, and the Waushara County Executive.

“These awards reflect the essence of what the Wisconsin PK-16 Leadership Council is all about,” said President Kevin Reilly of the University of Wisconsin System. “Over the six years of this program, each of the award recipients has demonstrated a commitment to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, PK-16. They have documented outcomes of their efforts, which were designed to meet the needs of their region, and have engaged in authentic partnerships involving higher education, school districts, and business and community agencies. We are proud to recognize their accomplishments.”

The Wisconsin PK-16 Leadership Council is comprised of leaders of the state’s four educational sectors: PK-12 schools through the Department of Public Instruction, the University of Wisconsin System, the Wisconsin Technical College System, and the state’s private colleges and universities through the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. The voluntary council works in partnership with leaders in business, industry, and government to enhance learning and learning opportunities throughout the state so that all students are prepared to live in and contribute to a vibrant 21st century society.

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NOTE: This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpi2008_156.pdf. Additional information about award-winning programs or the Wisconsin PK-16 Leadership Council is available at <http://www.wisconsin.edu/pk16/>.